

An aerial photograph of a city, likely St. Louis, showing a dense urban landscape with a river (the Mississippi River) winding through it. A major highway (Interstate 64) is visible, crossing the river via a bridge. The city is characterized by a grid-like street pattern and numerous buildings of varying sizes. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

III. Current Planning Efforts

Several planning efforts undertaken during the past ten years have proposed a broad range of solutions to the problems caused by postwar planning practices. This study has incorporated these approaches in its efforts to address the current challenges along South Capitol Street.



Rendering of South Capitol Street from NCPC's Legacy Plan, 1997



Monumental Core Framework from NCPC's Legacy Plan, 1997

Current planning strategies for revitalizing southeast and southwest Washington are holistic in scope and grounded in political and economic realities. They also consider a broad range of issues, including transportation, historic preservation, economic development, and social justice.

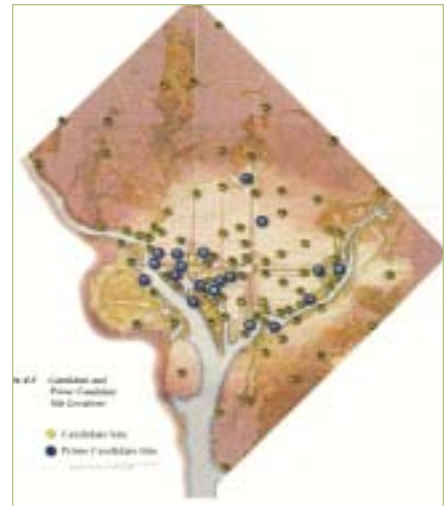
Taken together, these initiatives have the potential to transform the nation's capital on a scale far greater than the McMillan Commission's efforts of a century ago. Because of its central role in Washington's transportation infrastructure, all planning work currently underway considers South Capitol Street's improvement essential to the city's physical, economic, and social revitalization.

Current Planning Efforts

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), a federal planning agency, first described its vision for Washington in the 1997 publication *Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century*. Unlike previous federal planning efforts, *Legacy* seeks to preserve and enhance the buildings and public spaces contained in the Monumental Core while also improving the city as a whole. The plan calls for locating future museums and memorials away from the National Mall in other parts of the district. This would encourage visitors to travel into city neighborhoods, stimulating economic development in those communities. *Legacy* targets several areas that could benefit from this strategy, particularly the banks along the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers.

Legacy underscores the need for a comprehensive, convenient, and flexible transportation system that eliminates barriers between neighborhoods and improves movement within the city. It proposes untangling South Capitol Street from its overpasses and transforming it into a lively boulevard lined with housing, shops, public buildings, and parks. A new bridge across the Anacostia River and improvements to the street system east of the river would secure South Capitol's place as the monumental yet livable gateway to the city. Transforming South Capitol Street would also fulfill the Founding Fathers' intentions for it to serve as the city's ceremonial entrance.

Legacy laid the groundwork for NCPC's *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*, which was published in 2000. Created in cooperation with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Memorial Commission, this document designates over 100 sites throughout the District of Columbia for future memorials, museums, and other cultural facilities. The South Capitol Street corridor contains eight of these sites, two of which are considered prime because of their prominent locations and aesthetic potential.



Potential memorial and museum sites in the District of Columbia designated by the National Capital Planning Commission, 2000



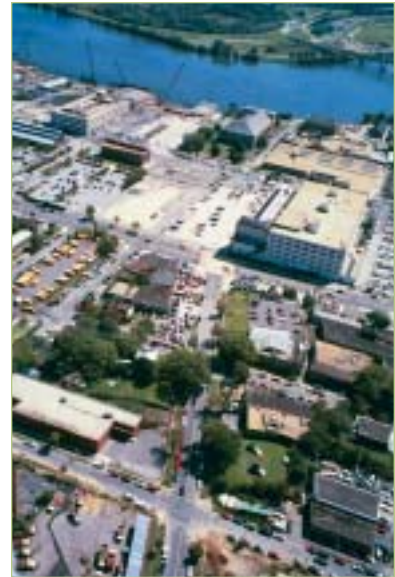
Eight sites for future monuments and memorials proposed by NCPC's *Monuments and Museums Master Plan*

- Washington Avenue at 2nd Street SW
- Intersection of M Street and Delaware Avenue SW
- North shore of the Anacostia River east of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge
- Terminus of South Capitol Street at the Anacostia River [prime site]
- Site in Anacostia Park formerly used as a nursery for the US Capitol [prime site]
- Anacostia Park SE near the Douglass Bridge
- South of V Street, West of Half Street SW
- Intersection of South Capitol Street and the Anacostia Freeway



Aerial view of the Anacostia River from the John Philip Sousa Bridge southwest toward Haines Point

The National Capital Planning Commission recently joined seventeen other federal agencies and the District of Columbia Government in the most comprehensive planning project undertaken in the city's 200-year history. The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI), a 25-year, multi-billion dollar effort, seeks to transform the 2800 acres along the Anacostia River into a world-class destination for residents and tourists alike. The plan calls for new residential, commercial, cultural, and recreational facilities from the Potomac River to the Maryland state line, unified by a continuous riverfront park featuring trails and revitalized natural habitats.



Aerial view of Southeast Federal Center west of the Navy Yard



Barney Circle looking over the John Philip Sousa Bridge up Pennsylvania Avenue SE



Washington Navy Yard

Goals of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative:

- Restore the Anacostia River's water quality and its natural beauty by cleaning up the river and eliminating sources of pollution
- Break down barriers to the river, particularly those created by intrusive transportation infrastructure, making the Anacostia easier to reach, travel alongside, and cross
- Reclaim the river's waterfront as a magnet of activity by providing places to live, work, and shop, as well as for cultural attractions and sporting events
- Stimulate sustainable economic development in waterfront neighborhoods
- Promote design excellence in design in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning
- Engage all community members and stakeholders to foster river stewardship

Like *The Legacy Plan* and the *Monuments and Memorials Master Plan*, AWI underscores the importance of South Capitol Street's revitalization. AWI and NCPC both advocate removing the Southeast Freeway, relocating the adjacent railroad tracks, and constructing a new, more urban bridge on a different alignment. These improvements would allow South Capitol to accommodate vehicular traffic along with pedestrians, cyclists, buses, and other forms of transit. It would also serve as the catalyst for development at Buzzard Point, Poplar Point, the Southeast Federal Center, and nearby neighborhoods.

The South Capitol Street Urban Design Study, published in 2003 by the National Capital Planning Commission and the District of Columbia Office of Planning, consolidates NCPC's work on South Capitol Street over the past decade and combines it with the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative. This report contains detailed information on existing open space, land use, land ownership, and zoning.

The NCPC-DCOP study includes three conceptual scenarios for the corridor. The first would maintain the existing 130-foot street section, limiting South Capitol Street to six lanes. The second proposes a 220-foot street section with a 100-foot-wide tree-lined center median to accommodate small small-scale memorials. The third calls for a 325-foot street section with a continuous linear park on the east side of South Capitol Street that could accommodate future memorials and museums. All three scenarios reconfigure the roadway east of the Anacostia River to improve access to Poplar Point.

Like the National Capital Planning Commission, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has been working on long-term planning projects for many years. The WMATA Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan, which considers extending the regional transit system, has led to other efforts which will benefit AWI in general and South Capitol Street in particular. *The District of Columbia Transit Development Study*, for example, proposes building a light rail line from the southwest waterfront east along M Street SE. It would cross the Anacostia River at the 11th Street Bridge as one of four priority light rail, tram or trolley lines connecting neighborhoods across the District. WMATA in cooperation with the District's Department of Transportation is beginning a more detailed study of these transit corridors that includes design and environmental analysis of a potential demonstration project east of the Anacostia River. In addition to the 11th Street bridge crossing, the study will examine the potential to incorporate rail transit into a future new South Capitol Street Bridge. WMATA also recently conducted a regional bus study which includes improvements to bus service along and near South Capitol Street. Both WMATA and the Maryland Department of Transportation are also considering commuter bus lines in the corridor.



Transportation Map from the *South Capitol Street Urban Design Study*

